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The Delius Society

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The Delius Society
Journal

A Special Issue to Celebrate the Anniversary of the Birth of
Sir Thomas Beecham, Bart.

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Illustrations

All the illustrations in this issue are of Sir Thomas Beecham. Unfortunately he seems never to have been photographed with Delius, and the closest the two men came on film was at the composer's re interment in 1935. The photograph on page 12 came from "The Daily Telegraph" of 27th May 1935, and that on page 21 from the collection of Ralph Nicholson. The illustration on page 17 appeared in "The Tatler" on 9th October 1946.

Cover Illustration

F Delius by Dawn Redwood (after Kapp)

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EDITORIAL

In connection with this year's Norwich Festival, which will feature the music of Delius and a Munch exhibition, I am organising a weekend for the Delius Society on similar lines to that held last year at Stow-on-the-Wold. I have purposely avoided seeking accommodation in Norwich itself, firstly because we are unlikely to be offered off-season rates there during the Festival, and secondly because I feel members would prefer a weekend in the country. We shall therefore be staying at Felmingham Hall, an Elizabethan hotel situated at North Walsham, about 12 miles from Norwich and not far from the coast. Here we have been offered the very competitive price of £10 (plus VAT) per person per day for bed, breakfast and evening meal, or £7 (plus VAT) per person per day for bed and breakfast only. (There is an additional charge of £1.50 per person per day for rooms with private bathrooms, which should be requested when booking.) All rooms are double or twin-bedded, so members coming alone should be prepared to share. The dates are 12th-14th October 1979, and members are asked to make their own booking arrangements *before the end of May*. (In the event of this *Journal* appearing after that date, please book as soon as possible.) It would also be helpful to me if those who do book would inform me of the fact so that I know how many to expect. A Delius Society meeting will be held nearby on the evening of 13th October to which non-members and non-residents will be welcome. There should be adequate room in cars for those who do not have their own transport; perhaps those who have spare seats will let me know? It may be helpful for me to point out that those coming straight from work on Friday are unlikely to have time to go to the hotel before the performance of *A Mass of Life* and are advised to make their own eating arrangements for that evening. A £10 Deposit is required when booking.

Those who heard Norman Del Mar conduct the work at the Maida Vale studios of the BBC some years ago (when he deputised for Genadi Rozhdestvensky) will need no reminder of the quality of the performance, and we all look forward to an exciting repeat of that evening.

. . .

Mention of Rozhdestvensky prompts a mention of the performance of *Brigg Fair* which he directed during April, probably the first work of Delius that he has conducted since taking over the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Knowing as we do of his sympathies for the composer, let us hope that it will be by no means the last. Incidentally, I understand that *Brigg Fair* is being used as incidental music to the BBC television series *My Son, My Son*.

. . .

Lionel Carley informs me that an admirable exhibition devoted to Munch and Delius is at present being held in Oslo and will be open until mid-summer. A splendid brochure has been produced and contains articles by Lionel himself and by John Boulton Smith, who addressed the Society on the friendship between Munch and Delius some years ago. Printed in both Norwegian and English, it costs £1.95, and ways are being investigated of obtaining a batch of copies for UK members.

* * *

Contrary to information given in our last issue which priced the new Study Score of *Hassan* at £15, Messrs Boosey & Hawkes tell me that it costs £12.50. The firm has also brought out a facsimile of Eric Fenby's vocal score of *The Magic Fountain* in a limited edition at £10. Other recent music from the same house includes *An Arabesque* (Study Score) at £2.50, the 'Cello Concerto (Pocket Score) at £2, the 'Cello *Romance* arranged for Viola and two interludes from *Fennimore and Gerda* arranged for oboe and piano. A Study Score of *Koanga* is due out later this year. October is the latest date set for release of the second box of Beecham-Delius records, due to contain (according to the Beecham Society Newsletter) *A Village Romeo and Juliet* and several previously unissued works such as *Songs of Sunset*, *Paa Vidderne*, the Second Dance Rhapsody and two songs with orchestra sung by Elsie Suddaby. A box of Beecham re-issues already available contains Alan Jefferson's *Sir Thomas Beecham — A Centenary Tribute*. This 256-page work with 48 illustrations was published on 21st April by Macdonald & Janes at £6.50.

* * *

Hon. Treasurer has asked me to remind members that subscriptions became due on 1st April and that the new rates (see page 1) now apply. Those who have been paying by Bankers' Order should amend the amount, and are also asked to note that the branch to which the money should be paid is now: The Midland Bank, 26 Norman Road. St. Leonards-on-Sea, Sussex.



A Partnership of Genius

By Stephen Lloyd

"[Beecham] is wonderfully gifted and destined to play, perhaps, the most important part in the development of modern music in England. My prophecy! Don't forget it!"

(Delius to Ethyl Smith, 17 February 1909)

"[You] thoro'ly understand my music and . . . are the one authority as to how it should be played . . ."

(Delius to Beecham, 10 March 1929)

"Fred always looked upon you as the most sympathetic interpreter of his music . . ."

(Jelka Delius to Beecham, 11 November 1934)

Queen's Hall, Monday 14 October 1907¹. An afternoon programme of works by Lalo, Bach, D'Indy, Tchaikovsky and Smetana played by the New Symphony Orchestra with a fifteen-year-old Joska (Joseph) Szigeti as soloist had just ended. From the audience 'a stranger of arresting appearance . . . with fine and ascetic features that might have been taken for those of a distinguished ecclesiastic had it not been for the curiously eager and restless expression both in the eyes and mouth'² made his way backstage to the artists' room and introduced himself to the twenty-eight-year-old conductor. An auspicious encounter indeed: the young conductor at the outset of his career was Thomas Beecham, the stranger Frederick Delius.

Since the privately-financed St. James's Hall concert in May 1899, not a note of Delius's orchestral works was heard in England until Henry Wood gave the Piano Concerto in October 1907. But in that intervening silence Fritz Cassirer, who in March 1904 had conducted in Elberfeld the first production of *Koanga* and who in February 1907 had in Berlin performed similar services for *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, was now planning his conducting début in England. Delius, at least one of whose works was to figure in that scheme, was investigating the orchestral situation in England on Cassirer's behalf and was under the impression that the choice of orchestra was limited to either the London Symphony or the Queen's Hall Orchestra. But after noticing a *Daily Telegraph* advertisement for Beecham's concert, Delius had been curiously drawn to the Queen's Hall that afternoon where he found to his delight a third orchestra which met Cassirer's

1. The fixing of this date is based upon Beecham's statement in *A Mingled Chime* (Hutchinson 1944), p. 63, that their meeting took place after his first Queen's Hall concert with the NSO. However, despite the reference in his *Frederick Delius* (Hutchinson 1959), p. 145, English music does not appear to have been played in addition to French music. A memoir by Joseph Szigeti of this concert appeared in *Le Grand Baton* Vol. 2 No. 3 and was re-printed in the Szigeti Memorial edition, Vol. 10 No. 1 March 1973 pp. 17-18.

2. *A Mingled Chime*, p. 63.

requirements. After some consultation with the conductor, the New Symphony Orchestra was engaged for 22 November.

Cassirer had originally hoped to present two concerts, possibly of English composers' works alone, or at least one all-Delius programme. But circumstances restricted him to a single concert which included works by Wagner and Strauss (notably *Ein Heldenleben*) to serve the dual function of playing some music familiar to the public as well as fulfilling Cassirer's wish to present himself as a virtuoso conductor. The work of unusual interest in the programme was Delius's *Appalachia*. The *Daily Telegraph* critic, probably Robin Legge, was favourably impressed by the whole concert. Cassirer, he wrote, 'proved himself a thoroughly capable commander of his forces . . . His manner is quietly confident, his beat well defined and clear, and his mastery of the music he directs is evident. A word of praise is due to the excellent playing of the New Symphony Orchestra.'³

The performance of *Appalachia* however was not an outstanding one. The *Musical Times* critic, writing with Handelian overtones, thought that 'although the new orchestra played well, an extra rehearsal might have made some of the rough places plain'.⁴ But in the orchestra's defence Beecham pointed out to Delius that 'the seven best 1st violins were not playing, four regular 2nd violins, and the four principal 'celli too. So that you can hardly form an idea of their capacities from this particular affair'. Nevertheless, as *The Monthly Musical Record* put it, 'in spite of a somewhat indifferent performance of the choral portions by the Sunday League Choir, the work made a very favourable impression'. / Beecham, an attentive listener, was in his own words 'startled and electrified'⁶ by the work. Of the outcome of this experience there was no doubt:

It seemed that if there was one thing above all else for the orchestra and myself to do at once, it was to acquire all of [Delius's] music that we could lay our hands on, make it as much our own as that of the lesser eighteenth-century masters, and play it often and everywhere.⁷

This he most decidedly did. Straightway he set about finding room for these works in his programmes. The first to be played by him was *Paris*. 'When I looked through "Paris" a couple of weeks ago,' he wrote to Delius on 1 December 1907, 'I formed a rather different idea of its difficulties. I thought it was just the sort of thing my fellows would revel in . . . I have inserted the "Dance of Life" in the programmes and may do "Paris" too.'

Paris was included in the two concerts Beecham gave on 11 January 1908 with the NSO in the Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool. *Lebenstanz* (*Life's Dance*) he was never to conduct. He may have changed his mind as Nikisch had announced his intention of giving that work in 1908 with the LSO. But that performance did not materialise either. Beecham wrote to Delius on 17 June 1908: 'I met Nikisch a short time ago . . . I asked him how it went and the beggar coolly replied that he had cut it out of the programme. Charming people, these foreigners!' The fact that *Paris* is on a similar scale but of a superior design to *Lebenstanz* may have also prompted Beecham's change of

3. *The Daily Telegraph*, 23.11.07.

4. *The Musical Times*, December 1907 p. 809.

5. *Monthly Musical Record*, January 1908.

6. *Frederick Delius*, p. 149.

7. *A Mingled Chime*, p. 64.



mind. (There was anyway an LSO performance, conducted instead by Arbos in January 1908).

In December 1907 Beecham was able to make a more intimate acquaintance with Delius when he combined a visit to Grez with a trip to Paris in search for a sarrusophonist needed for a performance of Holbrooke's *Apollo and the Seaman* that coming January. Then in July 1908 he set off with Delius on a walking holiday in Norway that extended well into the following month.⁸ As a result of this closer acquaintance, whatever the impact of that first hearing of *Appalachia* had made, stronger still was the effect of Delius's personality on a relatively raw Beecham, then passing through a period of 'unrest, indecision and self-questioning'.⁹ As he wrote himself, 'this unique character made a deep impression upon me and actively influenced my life for several years . . . For the first time in my career I had encountered a personality of unmistakable stamp, full, mellow and unchanging, to whom nothing in the world was ambiguous or equivocal . . . Delius in his own way was a complete man . . . a signpost to others on the way of life, a light to those in the darkness; and an unfailing reassurance to all who strove to preserve their faith in those two supreme human virtues, honesty and independence.'¹⁰ That Beecham, after a period of doubt, finally took the plunge and devoted his life to that of an orchestral conductor was 'due mainly to the convincing council [sic] and constant conviction of Frederick Delius'.¹¹ The one area in which Delius was not forthcoming with advice was, of course, the interpretation of his own works.

Beecham's next Delius performance was again of *Paris*, at Queen's Hall on 26 February 1908 as part of a series of concerts announced to consist 'entirely of novelties and unfamiliar works'. Balfour Gardiner was in the audience and wrote to Delius: 'Beecham gave it a splendid performance, & it would have been a great success if there had been more people in the hall.' Next came the first London performance of *Brigg Fair*, having previously been given in Liverpool and Birmingham by Bantock and Ronald. At the same time, according to Clare Delius,¹² Beecham was also actively involved in the Hanley performance of *Appalachia* on 2 April, the composer conducting. In between his own concerts and rehearsals in London, Beecham journeyed to Hanley to train the chorus and he was able to attend the concert itself.

On 14 April he again gave *Paris* at Queen's Hall, and on 16 May he played a youthful Delius work to which he was to return with affection in his later years – *Over the Hills and Far Away*. Of greater significance was his first performance of *Appalachia* at Queen's Hall on 13 June. 'I think we are going to have fun with "Appalachia". he wrote to Delius eight days before the concert. 'I am trying to get all the boys in London!' Four days after the concert he wrote again: 'The orchestra . . . blazed away at your work like a gang of navvies. I enlarged the band, doubled the whole brass (in places) and

8. See Delius's letter to Jelka Delius in Ethyl Smith's *Beecham and Pharoah* (Chapman & Hall 1935), pp. 19-21.

9. *A Mingled Chime*, p. 74.

10. *ibid.*, pp. 73-4.

11. *ibid.*, p. 75.

12. Clare Delius *Frederick Delius* (Nicholson & Watson 1935), pp. 181-2.

harps, and we kicked up a rare old shindy . . . ' Beecham had brought down the Birmingham City Choral Society with whom he had earlier given a series of concerts. Gardiner, who had one of his own works played in the same programme, informed Delius that 'Beecham did [*Appalachia*] well, & the chorus, though by no means perfect, was much better than at Cassirer's concert'. The composer and critic Havergal Brian was more extreme in his views: 'the chorus singing was really atrocious and the orchestral playing really brilliant'.¹³

Beecham's next conducting of Delius, on 3 December 1908, was another notable occasion. On 3 July he had written to the composer: 'I simply love "Sea Drift" – have learnt it by heart and you will be horrified to hear that I play and sing it on the piano to people up and down the kingdom!!! Everyone likes it! But I assure you that I have learnt all the harmonies quite correctly.' (It was Grainger who was once horrified to hear Beecham playing extracts from *Appalachia* on the piano with harmonies that were at variance with Delius's, Beecham seemingly unaware of the difference.¹⁴) The distinction of giving the first English performance of *Sea Drift* had fallen to Henry Wood, as part of the Sheffield Musical Festival in October 1908, with Frederic Austin as soloist. A few years earlier Austin was a young professor of composition at the Liverpool School of Music with whom Beecham acknowledged a fruitful association during his scholastic years. Of that first performance Delius wrote: 'Austin sang wonderfully – the chorus was wonderful but too loud. Wood's orchestra knew it perfectly, but he did not always take the right tempi, sometimes too slow and then too fast . . . '

Beecham's turn came in December, first at Hanley and the following day at Manchester. Delius attended both performances and commented that 'the orchestra and chorus sang and played wonderfully', though by now he was less happy with Austin's contribution. He 'drags and has a colourless voice', he complained. The chorus on both occasions was the justly famous North Staffordshire District Choral Society. By some accident the score had disappeared between the final rehearsal and the first concert. Unruffled, Beecham conducted the work from memory, as he was often to do (even on at least one notable occasion with a score so complex as *A Mass of Life* during the 1936 Norwich Triennial Festival).

Hitherto Beecham's orchestra had been the New Symphony Orchestra but he was soon to sever connections with them after a series of disagreements. On 21 September 1908 he wrote to Delius: 'I am sorry to say I am likely to have some trouble with my orchestra. 'Au fond' they are a rotten lot of fellows – no foresight or intelligence. And not a spark of decent feeling – in a word – thoroughly British.' Beecham's solution, and not to be an isolated occurrence in his career, was to form his own band, the Beecham Symphony Orchestra. On 28 January 1909 he informed Delius: 'Last Monday my orchestra made its first appearance'¹⁵ . . . I do not however have the full contingent until 22 February when I fire off my first heavy guns. I can quite

13. *Musical Opinion*, May 1924, p. 799.

14. John Bird Percy Grainger (Elek 1976), p. 139. Also cf. *A Mingled Chime*, pp. 111-2!

15. On 25 January 1909 a reduced 'Beecham Orchestra' appeared at Queen's Hall in a mixed programme of 12 items, vocal and instrumental, conducted by Beecham.

honestly declare that I shall have by then an orchestra which will simply wipe the floor with all the others combined.'

Sea Drift, receiving its first London hearing and conducted again from memory, was placed centrally in a programme framed by Berlioz's *Roman Carnival Overture* and *Te Deum*. "'Sea Drift' went stunningly, the choir were beautifully in tune and quite safe, and Austin's tempi were much better,' Beecham wrote five days after the concert. 'Of course, his voice is rather trying, but his share of the work was much better and more elastic . . . The band were frantically enthusiastic . . . They are really a wonderful lot, the richness of tone and delicacy of the wind are remarkable.'

The crowning achievement of Beecham's advocacy in these early years was the first complete performance of *A Mass of Life* at Queen's Hall on 7 June 1909. By all accounts it was not a perfect performance but the orchestra was excellent. 'Nothing was wanting,' summed up *The Musical News* critic, 'to render the work favourably: its presentation must have been most gratifying to the composer, who was present, and at the conclusion of the concert was presented by his admirers with a magnificent floral lyre.'

The next landmark was the first English production on 22 February 1910 of *A Village Romeo and Juliet* at Covent Garden. However on Delius's own admission it was not a success. In 1916 he wrote to Philip Heseltine: 'The attempt to mount *A Village Romeo and Juliet* with English singers, chorus, and stage manager, was a miserable failure – inefficiency and inexperience bursting from every crack. The only good point was the splendid English orchestra and Beecham's conducting.' Perhaps an unduly harsh retrospective judgment.¹⁶

There were no other notable peaks scaled in those years leading up to the Great War. Beecham gave an all-Delius programme in Queen's Hall on 16 June 1911. Inevitably there was *Paris*, as well as *Dance Rhapsody No. 1*, *Appalachia* again, and the first performance of *Songs of Sunset*. Delius was present and the concert drew 'one of the largest audiences of the season'. It was also a momentous occasion for one young devotee – Philip Heseltine – providing him with his first 'live' hearing of any Delius work as well as a chance to meet the composer. He was 'immensely struck by Beecham's magnificent conducting'. The works of Delius had now become a regular feature of Beecham's programmes, especially *Paris* which with its brilliant scoring became an orchestral show-piece almost to rival the works of Richard Strauss. When in fact Beecham took his orchestra to Berlin in December 1912 *Paris* was one of four Delius works in the repertoire. Strauss himself was in the audience at the second concert. 'We had a long talk afterwards,' Beecham wrote to Delius. 'He was immensely impressed and interested in "Paris" which he had not heard before. He was also quite delighted with the Entr'acte from the "V. Romeo" and said he would give it at one of his concerts in Berlin.' Strauss certainly planned a performance of the 'Vorspiel (Romeo and Juliet)' for 27 February 1914 in Berlin, though the work did not appear in the final programme which included Grainger's *Mock Morris*. Nonetheless Beecham reports him as saying (with rather less modesty than flattery): 'I had no idea that anyone except myself was writing such good music as this'.¹⁷

16. See *Daily News* review in *Delius Society Newsletter* No. 26, pp. 12-13.

17. *A Mingled Chime* p. 113.

One long-planned event which had several times to be postponed was the second English performance of the *Mass*. In January 1911 Beecham had written to Delius of his intention to perform it the following spring, but that did not take place because, as he wrote in May, he could not 'get hold of the right singers'. He then planned the *Mass* for December 1912 and had written to engage Felix von Kraus, a Viennese who excelled in songs of an epic nature and who had previously sung the rôle of Zarathustra at Elberfeld in October 1911. But Kraus was not available for Beecham's date, resulting in a further postponement until the following January. After more delays a performance was announced in the press for March 1913 with Herman Weil in Kraus's place. Even then, when the concert finally took place at Covent Garden on 10 March after a last minute change of venue, there were two late alterations to the soloists. Charles Clark, the Zarathustra of both Beecham's and the Elberfeld 1909 performances, sang the rôle in English in contradiction to the remainder of the quartet who sang in German. Heseltine wrote of the performance as 'not merely mediocre but appalling'.¹⁸ In the circumstances, with a choir tired from much travelling and rehearsing, it could hardly have been otherwise.

To quote Heseltine again, writing in the early twenties, 'it cannot be pretended that Beecham was uniformly successful in his performances of Delius; but his failures were due, not to any lack of musical ability or understanding, but to sheer carelessness and lack of adequate preparation. His genius was such that it would carry him through circumstances that would cause a lesser man to break down completely . . . When Beecham took pains over a work of Delius no one could have desired a subtler or more sensitive interpretation. But it is beyond the power of any man to give an authoritative performance of a work with which either he himself, from want of study, or the performers, from want of rehearsal, are not sufficiently familiar.'¹⁹ Certainly one can only marvel at the enormous work-load Beecham took on during the most active stages of his career.

One last outstanding event before the outbreak of war was Beecham's second all-Delius concert, held at the Royal Academy of Music on 8 July 1914. Here for the first time under Beecham was heard *In a Summer Garden* – quintessential Delius and Beecham. The war period saw Beecham financially keeping afloat organisations like the Royal Philharmonic Society and the Hallé Orchestra. Delius was well represented in his programmes. *Sea Drift* he gave several times with the Hallé and orchestral snippets from *A Village Romeo* and *Koanga* made frequent appearances, sometimes with vocal contributions as well. On 3 December 1914 Delius attended a Manchester Hallé concert at which Beecham gave extracts from *A Village Romeo* and the Harrison sisters played the Brahms Double Concerto, thus sowing the seed for Delius's work in that medium. Beecham did much to keep the patriotic flag flying. Generally his musical sympathies were not inclined to be Teutonic. In October he had written to Delius: 'Of course, for years to come any kind of rapprochement between this country and Germany will be out of the question, and I think on the whole it will be a splendid thing for us, for this means the end of the long German influence and domination here in musical matters, which is bound sooner or later to produce a healthy

18. Peter Warlock *Delius* (Bodley Head rev. ed. 1952), p. 66.

19. *ibid.* p. 66.



reaction in our own people. It is not as if Germany had still something vital and first-rate to send us: on the contrary, in music, and more especially in thought, she is a bankrupt Nation.' Perhaps intentionally he had overlooked Richard Strauss. Perhaps, too, herein lies one reason for his championing the music of Delius. Maybe that at the outset he was looking amongst the rising generation of British composers for examples to hold up against the overbearing German influence and that of those who had not already like Elgar become established figures, Delius had in his estimation stood head and shoulders above the rest. In September 1908 Beecham had written to Delius: 'I am now busy getting out my Concert Circular - I have absolutely no interesting British novelties - I have a pile of stuff here by V. Williams, O'Neill, Scott, Holbrooke & Co. but it is all very weak. These fellows do not seem to advance at all . . . I am amusing myself by asking the whole of the British school down here one by one in the evening and when they arrive laden with "stuff" I sit down at the piano and play from beginning to end your 'Mass'. It nearly killed both Bell and Holbrooke who were too 'done up' afterwards to venture on anything of their own.'

Two events of a private nature coloured Beecham's war period and the succeeding years. The first was the death of his father on 23 October 1916 in consequence of which Goossens deputised for Beecham at a Hallé performance of *Appalachia* three days later, as he did on several occasions. The other was bankruptcy proceedings which caused Beecham's removal from the concert platform from mid-1920 until April 1923. His last major Delius undertaking before this enforced unnatural hibernation was the Covent Garden production of *A Village Romeo and Juliet* in March and April 1920. Typically, at the concert to mark his re-emergence in grand style, *The Walk to the Paradise Garden* rubbed shoulders with *Ein Heldenleben*. And now for a while, after the intense activity of his pre-war Debuss championing, there came a comparative lull until 1929. In February there was an all-Delius broadcast listened into by the composer at Grez, in March another *Appalachia* and on 14 June a performance with the Harrison sisters of the Double Concerto at Queen's Hall. 'Probably never had so sympathetic

a performance' wrote *The Musical Times* critic. All this was but a prelude for by October the name of Delius was positively ablaze in London.

Almost exactly twenty-two years after their first meeting in Queen's Hall there came, in the self-same building, the climax to Beecham's devotion to Delius: the first of six concerts in a Delius festival held in October and November 1929. When he had received news of Beecham's intentions, Delius wrote to him on 10 March: 'I was overjoyed by your letter about the proposed Festival etc. What good news! What life and enterprise you have and what would musical England do without you? I do believe they are at last beginning to see what they have got in you.'

Robin Legge, a fellow-student of Delius at Leipzig, described the scene at the opening concert which Beecham conducted from memory:

The composer, who had arrived in Queen's Hall in a chair, was found, when the public were admitted, to be seated in an armchair in the Grand Circle, from which a few seats had been barred off in order to give him, his wife, and his attendant sufficient space in which to be comfortable . . . It was at the sheer mastery of Sir Thomas Beecham's conducting . . . that Delius smiled. Indeed, he was enraptured. 'I did not think it would all be like this my friend,' he said, as he grasped my hand . . . At the end, the composer bowed his head over and over again and gently waved his arms in acknowledgement of the storms of applause that greeted him; the old bright and rather amused smile lay upon his handsome countenance, that I at least have been privileged to know for close upon half a century . . . His face was wreathed in smiles once more when he added, as he waved his hands across his stricken eyes, 'All this helps me to endure my affliction'.²⁰

At the conclusion of the concert there was an ovation and a speech from Beecham in which he thanked the audience on Delius's behalf for his reception, assuring them that the five remaining concerts would be of equal interest.

Of the third concert's reception Ferruccio Bonavia wrote in *The Daily Telegraph*:

When the performance concluded the audience, who filled every part of the house, cheered again and again, while Mr. Delius bowed and waved his hand from his chair on the left-hand side of the circle. The touching tribute continued until Sir Thomas Beecham turned to the audience and announced that the composer was so moved by the enthusiasm of his reception that he contemplated – perhaps not very seriously (added Sir Thomas) – remaining here.²¹

The final concert was a memorable performance of *A Mass of Life*. Again Bonavia described the closing moments of the Festival:

At the conclusion the audience burst into applause as the singers were leaving the platform. Then they turned to the composer, who was sitting in the circle, and cheered again and again until Sir Thomas Beecham came forward to hold out prospects of another Delius Festival . . .

. . . Delius, who had occupied his usual place in the balcony, delighted the audience by speaking. Leaning forward, he said in a firm

20. *The Daily Telegraph*, 14.10.29.

21. *ibid.*, 19.10.29.

clear voice which could be heard in every corner of the hall, 'I thank you very much for the very fine reception you have given me. I should also like to thank Sir Thomas Beecham for his inspired performance. This festival has been the time of my life'.²²

In the few remaining years of Delius's lifetime the most important performances given by Beecham, briefly listed, were the 1931 Leeds Festival *Mass of Life*; in 1932 a BBC *Village Romeo and Juliet* in May and a RPS *Mass of Life* in April; in 1933 an all-Delius programme at Queen's Hall in March (*Hassan Suite*, *Dance Rhapsody No.2*, *Songs of Sunset*, and *Appalachia*), another *Mass of Life* in April at the Royal Albert Hall, and *Songs of Sunset* again at the Queen's Hall in December; and in February 1934 *North Country Sketches* for the RPS and a broadcast Hallé all-Delius programme in March (including *Songs of Sunset* and *Appalachia*).

Home at Grez, Delius was dependent on his wireless set and his gramophone for the great pleasure he derived from Beecham's interpretations. But the recordings were few and he longed for more. He wrote to Beecham on 17 December 1933: 'I have a new marvellous Gramophone E.M.G. and derive great pleasure from listening to your records of my works. When am I to have the records of *Appalachia*, *Paris*, the *Idyll* & *Songs of Farewell* etc.? I am just longing to be able to put them on my gramophone. This is now my only pleasure. Don't wait too long, dear friend, or it will be too late for me to enjoy them.' Sadly he was not to hear any of the Delius Society recordings, though had it not been for the unnecessary delay on the part of the French Customs he could have listened to the *Paris* 78s before his death. Ironically, on 8 November 1934, during the Memorial Concert held by the RPS at Queen's Hall, Beecham delivered a speech on behalf of the Delius Society in which he said that 'competent critics' considered his recording of *Paris* to be the best orchestral records ever produced. The memorial programme included the *Hassan Suite*, *Eventyr*, *Sea Drift*, *Paris*, *Cynara*, and the closing scene of *Koanga*. Other memorial tokens, in spirit if not in name, were the three performances of *A Village Romeo and Juliet* student production at the Royal College of Music in June 1934; the inclusion of *An Arabesque*, *Songs of Sunset* and *Paris* in that year's Leeds Festival; and a BBC Queen's Hall *Mass of Life* on October 24 with Beecham apparently 'suffering acute pain during the whole evening' and Jelka Delius sitting in the audience.

This was not of course the end to the story of Beecham's playing Delius 'often and everywhere' (greater space would be needed to do justice to his performances abroad, hardly touched on here). But fittingly the final page to its most glorious chapter was his graveside tribute spoken at Delius's reinterment in May 1935 at Limpsfield. There also members of the London Philharmonic Orchestra were present to play a selection of works. When in his address Beecham spoke of Delius having grown up 'a rebel and a dissident' he had perhaps touched on one shared characteristic in these two otherwise dissimilar men that good fortune had brought together. It was surely due in part to this rebellious spirit that, despite, in Heseltine's words, there being 'no critic in England to share his enthusiasm and to help him in his up-hill task of familiarising the public with an unknown and somewhat difficult composer' that 'the credit of establishing Delius's

22. *ibid.*, 2.11.29.

reputation in this country belongs to Beecham alone'.²³

23. Warlock, op. cit., pp. 64-5

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Grateful thanks are due to Lionel Carley for kindly making the Beecham-Delius correspondence available and to the Delius Trust for granting permission to quote from it.

“Irmelin”

A Bitter Pill for Beecham
by Geoffrey G. Hoare



It had taken Fritz Delius from 1890 to 1892, in France, to complete his first major composition, the opera *Irmelin*. It was first staged and presented to the public by Sir Thomas Beecham at the New Theatre, Oxford, and attended by the author of this article (and others) on the opening night, 4th May 1953. Subsequently, and no doubt due to the sparse and often papered audience, Sir Thomas failed to conduct – as billed – several of the few remaining performances.

To the end of his days the famous conductor never quite forgave the university city for its lack of support and interest in this unique production. Later in 1953, he appeared on B.B.C. Television with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in a programme *The Conductor Speaks*. In an introduction to some fifteen minutes of music from Act 2 of *Irmelin*, Sir Thomas, sans script, sans teleprompt, attempted to justify the thin airy-fairy and often comic Delius libretto:

“Good evening ladies and gentlemen, tonight you are going to hear two portions [cough] of the opera *Irmelin* by Frederick Delius. This opera was the first performed theatrical production of the composer. It was written in 1890 and performed for the first time in this country, the land of his birth, at Oxford in 1953, that was 63 years after it was written. Of course some people might think he was lucky even at that. Mozart wrote *Così fan tutte* in about 1790 and the first public performance of that, in this country, was in 1910, a hundred and twenty years later; so it was, as I have said, that Delius may consider himself lucky in only having to wait sixty years. There are excellent reasons why these pieces are so belatedly heard, [‘er] the principal one of course is that they are of extraordinary charm and beauty. *Those qualities of course are fatal in the eyes of most of the British Public, The British Press, and those responsible for the production of Opera.*

Now for the work itself: *Irmelin* is a Princess, a Royal Princess from a far Northern Country, the land of legend. She is sought in marriage by one hundred suitors. Knights from all parts of the country of which her father is the king, is the ruler. She refuses them all – she is waiting for the right man to turn up! – but he does not turn up, much to the chagrin of everyone around her. In the first act you see a little of this sort of thing – you see Knights and her father and attendants and all sorts of other people. But we

are not concerned with the first act tonight in a musical way – we go on at once to the second act when you are introduced through the music, but not through vision (in this instance), to the hero. The hero is a swineherd, he's supposed to be a swineherd. For some reason or other [cough] which is never explained he has lost himself in a mysterious wood on the confines of a domain over which a Robber Chief is Overlord. He is enslaved, but his captivity was not too disagreeable as within the castle [cough] there was a delightful assembly of fascinating young females. However the time came when this hero [cough], Nils by name, thought he ought to break away – because in his mind, in his heart there is a secret longing for a Mystical Stream called the Silver Stream. You must remember this is really a fairy opera. This stream, which he thinks, or rather imagines – 'cos he doesn't think very much this hero, like most other operatic heroes he thinks very little. He imagines that this stream, if followed will lead him to some glorious destination. In the second act as I've said you are introduced through the music to the hero, you hear the music associated with him, and then you hear the rowdier strains which take you to the Robbers' Castle, you hear music connected with the Silver Stream which he at last discovers. He exultantly follows its course and is lost in the distance – the curtain goes down.

Incidentally I should mention that you are/will be enabled to see on the picture tonight some of the costumes, about half a dozen of the costumes, that were used in this unlucky production at Oxford. I may say 'unlucky' because of course from the practical and commercial point of view it was a most complete and fatal flop, like most of the operatic productions with which I have been associated in this country . . ."

[Background laughter from orchestra members and B.B.C. technicians, at this ending].

Then followed 15 minutes of orchestral illustration.

In that television programme it took Sir Thomas over three minutes to recount the story of Act 2 of *Irmelin*. By the end of it many viewer/listeners must have been completely bemused. Many broadcasting authorities still often take up to seven minutes or more to unfold an opera libretto leaving most listeners in utter confusion at the end. Surely the only solution is to *print* a brief synopsis to each act – for it to make sense – in the daily or weekly programme sheet? Sir Thomas had but briefly sketched in the content of Act 1 relative to the heroine, a princess of Turandot (1924!) similarity. She had a hard time holding the audience's attention for long periods of stage inaction. Small wonder one's eyes and ears turned to the orchestra pit where the music and the R.P.O. was mercifully covering up some of the weaknesses of Fritz's libretto. Even:

Irmelin: "Knights for thee but not for me"

Maid: "Why not for thee and why for me?"

brought a titter from the gods.

One might blame Sinding for convincing Delius it was best, like Wagner, to write his own libretto.

Given more time, Sir Thomas might have put his audience's mind to rest, without divulging the almost non-existent plot, that the opera ended on a happy-ever-after 'note', not common to many operas. He left unsaid how hero Nils managed to arrive at the castle, by following the Silver Stream, or

IN A SUMMER GARDEN.

Andante.
With quiet mood.



the dot and six months to the day, in time to stop the depressed Irmelin's enforced marriage taking place in an atmosphere of gloom. He would have difficulty in explaining how swineherd Nils, clad as he was, ever gained admission, and how on the invitation of the King (when it was announced he was a minstrel) was immediately able to perform a well-rehearsed kind of calypso in honour of the event – accompanied by the R.P.O. But with everyone now convinced that the minstrel was a Prince in disguise, the King obliges by inviting *everyone*, included Irmelin's defrauded husband-to-be, off to a stag hunt! This episode was baptismal ground for some of the composer's favourite horn calls of true Wagnerian quality, both on and off stage – to be oft repeated in later works.

Prince and Princess all alone in the now *completely empty* castle – aided by, even then, Delius's estatic and sensuous music, must fall in love. They agreed to meet in the garden at sunset, but must first be given time to change their clothes. At this point we are out of action again, but soon – alas, not soon enough for some of the Oxford cough-laden audiences – Nils re-appeared in perfectly-fitting garments, presumably acquired off someone else's peg, followed by Irmelin clad in going-away apparel. At this garden meeting Delius rightly involves them in a Leibeslied of Wagnerian style and dimension. As Beecham once rightly observed "arising to noble heights of ecstasy". After this lengthy 'appassionata' the lovers finally move off hand in hand, hatless, coatless, without luggage, sustenance and other necessities into the distance. The curtain descends to a characteristic "Delius diminuendo" ensuring, as it does in so many later works, that there would be a minimum of applause . . .

Still in the 1950's Beecham had by no means written off *Irmelin*. In 1959 Hutchinson & Co. published his book *Frederick Delius* in which he wrote of the opera: "Taking the work as a whole I have little hesitation in claiming for it the distinction of being the best first opera by any composer known to me. There are surprisingly few weak moments; some have real power, and many exude charm and allurements." Replying to some criticisms in reviews of his book, he wrote contradictorily, in 1959 to a national newspaper:—"I cannot accept that Delius's first two operas failed because he was his own librettist – *yet the evidence starts with 'Koanga'*. How sad that two years work on such lovely music in *Irmelin* is so rarely heard."

Delius did not finish with *Irmelin* after 1892, for five years later the fifth title in his set of seven Danish Songs with orchestra was entitled *Irmelin Rose*. It is strange too that Delius at the end of his days produced with Eric Fenby's devoted help a lovely short orchestral work, *Irmelin* Prelude, based on themes from the opera. Maybe it was a dying composer's 'reversion', but one writer has suggested it could have been Delius *final* tone picture of his own Princess (Jelka) confined to their 'castle' at Grez – and waiting, waiting – like Irmelin in her ivory tower.

Among the audience at the Oxford première was a distinguished visitor, the Rt. Hon. Edward Heath, M.P. Unfortunately he found the opera "unattractive" but he also rates (in writing) *A Mass of Life and Sea Drift* as "being purposeless." Delius, too, was very conservative in his musical tastes, and like many of us had his violent likes and dislikes – possibly carol concerts?

Apart from the opera, the *Irmelin* Prelude holds my special affection, it

being the very first Delius miniature I ever heard, and it was under Beecham', in Birmingham in about 1936. In my mid-twenties I sat with my father and mother in the front row – the only seats available being just to the left, and very close to the podium. As the music died away, I exclaimed out loud, and far too loud, before the applause: "God – how beautiful."

It created some general amusement in the stalls and a glare from The Maestro, who turned in our direction before taking a bow. A glare that softened to a grin when he saw my father rebuking me for unseemly behaviour in the presence of *his* God, Sir Thomas Beecham. "Glad someone liked it", observed the Maestro with a chuckle to his concertmeister.

Over several years in the 1950's I was researching and broadcasting in Norway on the many aspects of the Greig-Delius friendship, on the influence of Greig and his wife, the singer Nina Hagerup; plus the effect the country had on the formative years of Fritz Delius. Sir Thomas took me to task over an early article I sent him saying that "no one, no other composer ever had the slightest influence on *Frederick* Delius." "Poppycock" I think he wrote, but made no attempt to dispute my evidence.

1. A. K. Holland's splendid analyses of the Delius songs, of the many Norwegian settings, and of the wholesale plagiarising of these and others at a time when Fritz came heavily under the spell of the North, just prior to commencing *Irmelin*.
2. That 'he' had been "influenced" by negro or negroes singing as was obvious in *Florida*, *Appalachia* etc.
3. That the Norwegian influence was far stronger than previous writers admitted. Apart from the Greigs (they 'influenced' Julius Delius too) there was in lesser degree Fru Mordt, Heiberg (of *Folkeraadet* fame), Edvard Munch, Halfdan Jebe, Ibsen, Bjørnson and many other poets to name but a few of his 'Norskvenner'. There are letters to show that almost every early Delius composition existing today was first submitted to Greig, and often Sinding and Halvorsen for comment and constructive criticism, *including the proofs of Irmelin*.
4. Also mentioned was the fact that Sinding was a Wagner fanatic from boyhood and told Delius 'he writes his own librettos so can you.' This at a time when *Irmelin* was a pipe dream, and Greig was already in 1889 warning Delius about the danger of 'bringing together a Norwegian tune and a Wagnerian vocal line.'

As far as Wagner was 'concerned' with Delius's first two operas, perhaps I should have said 'imitative' rather than 'influenced by.' Previous writers had made a strong claim for Chopin. I had argued that in *Irmelin* the hero Nils (a Norwegian, surely) was a type-cast *Parsifal* minstrel, and in the Robbers' Castle (Act 2) up popped *Parsifal*-type maidens. Somewhere there was also a portrayal of a storm of pastoral symphonic quality, plus Wagnerian horn calls in quantity. Two years later in *The Magic Fountain* (Act 1) Fritz could have easily borrowed Wagner's 'props' for his own *Flying Dutchman*-type shipwreck. But Sir Thomas would have none of it and said there was no outside influence at work when Delius wrote the love duets between Nils and Irmelin or Solano and Watawa, or in the love duets or liebestod in his later operas. They were an essential part in the music schedule of any opera craftsman . . . With that pronouncement, for the sake of peace, I agreed.

PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT of the production of "IRMELIN" on 11th, 14th, 16th, 7th and 9th MAY 1953

<u>TO OPERA EXPENSES</u>				By Theatre Receipts (net)	1925.13.11.
<u>Cost of Scenery and Properties</u>		1793. 2. 1.		<u>Less</u> 50% retained by Theatre per contract	577.14. 2.
<u>Salaries and Fees</u>					1347.19. 9.
Artists	1058. 9. 0.			<u>Add</u> Receipts representing Entertainment	
Orchestra	2779.18. 0.			Duty from which exemption was granted	341.16. 7.
Musical Staff	282. 3. 3.				1689.16. 4.
Stage Staff	308.10. 5.			<u>Less</u> Commission to Ticket Agencies	219. 4.
Producer	500. 0. 0.				1626.17. 0.
Choreographer	60. 0. 0.			<u>Loss on Production</u> , carried down	9259. 8. 0.
Costume Designer	250. 0. 0.				
Scenery Designer	150. 0. 0.				
Stage Labour and Electricians	263.13. 0.				
National Insurance	35.11.10.	5688. 5. 6.			
<u>Rent of Rehearsal Rooms</u>		86. 0. 0.			
<u>Travelling and Hotel Expenses</u>					
Fares — Artists, Staff and Orchestra	342.14. 8.				
Hotels — Artists and Staff	384. 5. 9.	727. 0. 5.			
Transport — Scenery and Properties		113. 0. 1.			
<u>Hire Charges</u>					
Lighting Equipment	85.12. 9.				
Wigs	65.19. 0.				
Costumes and Shoes	978. 3. 6.				
Properties	6. 0. 0.	1135.15. 3.			
<u>Production Expenses</u>					
Publicity and Printing	435. 9. 1.				
Printing and Copying of Scores and Parts	548.19. 2.				
Make-up Services	61.11. 6.				
Wardrobe Sundries	52. 6. 7.				
Staff Refreshments	16. 7. 0.				
Insurance of Costumes and Scenery	44.19. 0.				
Gratuities	46. 0. 0.				
Electricity and Purchase of Lighting					
Equipment	69. 8. 5.				
Sundries	12. 7. 0.	1287. 7. 9.			
<u>OFFICE EXPENSES</u>					
Postage and Stationery	2. 0. 4.				
Telephone	8.13. 7.				
Legal and Accountancy Charges	105. 0. 0.	115.13.11.			
		<u>£10946. 5. 0.</u>			<u>£10946. 5. 0.</u>

The above account is reproduced by courtesy of Mr. T. Hazlem, F.C.A., who was for many years Sir Thomas Beecham's accountant.

A Legendary “Village Romeo”

by CHRISTOPHER REDWOOD

Late in 1933 Frederick Delius was elected an honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Music, and shortly afterwards plans were taken in hand to produce *A Village Romeo and Juliet* at the College under Sir Thomas Beecham's baton the following year. The dates arranged were 27th, 28th and 29th June, and it was hoped that the composer might be able to come to London to see the production. This, however, was not to be, for just seventeen days before the first night Delius died at Grez. So it was that this production came to be a memorial to him. Sir Thomas made a short speech before the first performance in which he stressed the need for a right approach to the opera and spoke of the simplicity and love of nature characteristic of Delius and of their reflection in his work. After the last performance the Director presented Sir Thomas with a score of *Götterdämmerung*, and the conductor made another speech in which he praised the “real beer” and youthful enthusiasm of the students, both of which he considered uncommon in operatic performances. For the record, 141 of them had taken part, and the music had been prepared by Hermann Grünebaum and Constant Lambert.

Writing up the production later in the year, the Royal College of Music magazine stated:

‘Those of us who heard *Pelleas and Melisande* [sic] at College some years ago thought that such a beautiful performance could



scarcely be equalled by any future opera. We were mistaken. For beauty of setting, intelligent singing, and, above all, for sensitive orchestral playing, the three evenings given to *A Village Romeo and Juliet* reached a high water mark of achievement..... No detail was overlooked in securing an interpretation ideal in its poetry and intimacy.'

The student who led the orchestra in these performances was Ralph Nicholson, now well-known as a violinist, composer, conductor and teacher, and who is now Director of Studies at the Surrey County Music School. He also has achieved some fame for his Beecham caricatures, and he appeared in the guise of the conductor in a television *Omnibus* programme about him. I asked him what he remembered about working with Beecham.

'He always treated you like a gentleman', was the immediate reply. 'I remember when we were rehearsing he suddenly stopped and said to me: "Er, Mr. Nicholson, what do you consider the most efficacious bowing for this particular bar?" Now many young students would have been thrown into confusion by such a question, and in any case I had not worked out any particular bowing scheme, but I took care not to lose my head and said "Well, Sir Thomas, as it's *piano*, up-bow at the point, I think, will get a smoother effect", or something like that.

"Very well, that's adopted. Will you put it in the parts, ladies and gentlemen?"

'There was no real reason why he should have sought my advice on such a matter, but it was his way of showing the rest of the orchestra that he had established *rapport* with their leader. I never felt that he was the "big chief" or "the tyrant", but that we were co-operating together. Later I had to go onto the stage to play some of the solos associated with the Dark Fiddler — he hadn't discovered my name up to that point — and he turned to the sub-principal and asked "Er, what is the name of the leadah?"

"Mr. Nicholson, Sir Thomas".

"Er, Mr. Nicholson, you are a little too far away. Will you come a little nearer so that we can hear what you are playing behind the scenes?"

So I moved forward and said "Is that all right, Sir Thomas?"

"Yes, that is very good. We have exactly what we want."

'That marvellously elegant way of talking to you made you feel right "up there", and it was all so much easier. You got that wonderful feeling that he wasn't the only person there and that you and he were working together on this thing.

'In the close proximity of the theatre at the College, during *The Walk to the Paradise Garden* he suddenly did one of his "whoahs" and swung down and knocked my bow off the string and I stopped playing for a couple of seconds. He just stroked his beard and smiled and carried on. In fact I still possess a broken baton which, I think, dates from the occasion. He either broke it on me or on something else. Certainly (and this has now become a cliché) he somehow made you play better than you thought you could — he drew something out of you and you can't describe what it was except for the word "personality"

or "inspiration". He knew how to get the best, even out of a bad orchestra (not that ours was a bad one).

'It was just the student orchestra, was it?' I asked.

'Oh, yes, he didn't bring in any professionals. Another thing I remember: on the front cover of the first fiddle part, in fact of all the parts, was a notice saying "NO MARKS OF ANY KIND MUST BE MADE ON THESE PARTS", and I could see that all the markings Beecham wanted had been there before. The previous performance was more than a decade before and Beecham was obviously the last person to use them, and he had marked all these parts in blue pencil, right through the six scenes, and some idiot had rubbed the whole lot out, so we had to put them all in again. (And incidentally, on that previous occasion the leader of the orchestra, I was very proud to find out, was Albert Sammons. He was in the audience at the College, as also was Delius's sister Clare.) Now when do you think we put in those markings? Beecham kept on putting off letting me have the score to do it, and we had a special rehearsal on the Sunday afternoon before the first performance, which was on the Wednesday. I waited in the entrance hall at College to receive Sir Thomas and get the score from him so that we could get on with it as soon as possible. He arrived outside the College in the maroon Daimler which he had bought from the Prince of Wales, and I looked out and there was Sir Thomas in the back seat with a large cigar and a straw hat on, just calmly sitting there when we were expecting him to be rehearsing. Eventually, when he felt his cigar was short enough, he came out of the car and into the College, and I said "Could I have the score, Sir Thomas? I want to put the marks in the parts for the performance next week."

"I'm very sorry. I haven't marked the score yet, but I'll let you have it directly I have," came the reply. So we rehearsed without his meticulous direction marks, and at the end he said, "Don't worry. I'll let you have it to-morrow." In the end there was an absolute panic about how we were going to get those parts marked in time for the performances. On the Monday night I had an urgent call from College: "Will you get here at 8 o'clock to-morrow morning with as many people as possible to mark the parts?" At last they had got the score, and those many people included Sir Hugh Allen himself (the Director), and a lot of Professors. We worked as hard as we could but I think out of those six scenes we only got one completely marked by the time of the performance. So you just had to be alert and observe what Sir Thomas was indicating.'

'Some of those names on the programme are very familiar: Thomas Hancock (Showman and Third Bargee) was a very fine singer who died some years ago; he married Jane Vowles who played Vreli. Roderick Lloyd (Merry-go-Round Man) was a Welsh tenor with a lovely voice; Barbara Lane (Wheel-of-Fortune Woman), I often see her. Frederick Sharp, who played the dark Fiddler on one night, did a lot of opera. He went to Australia for about twenty years and then sang with the old Sadler's Wells company. He then became Director of Opera at the Birmingham School of Music, and is still a Professor of Singing at the Royal College. Norman Menzies: I see he played Marti in all three

performances. He was an Australian who was pretty good. Marjorie Avis, who played Vreli in the first scene, has only just retired from the BBC Singers after forty years.' Most celebrated of all, playing the part of the Poor Horn-player for one night only and singing in the tenor chorus, was Peter Pears — a rôle which he described to me as so humble that he had no memories of it worth recording! I wonder whether this was the only time he sang under Beecham?

'Looking back on these performances,' concluded Ralph Nicholson, 'I think if I had to list the six most thrilling musical events of my life I'd put *A Village Romeo and Juliet* at the top, mainly for the thrill of working with Beecham. Although I was with Malcolm Sargent for conducting, there were times when Constant Lambert was in charge of the conducting class, and I remember him saying that the secret of Beecham's Delius was that it was always moving; it never got stuck or slow. So many people wallow in it, and they listen to it, and if you start listening to music it gets slower. Whereas Beecham's was always moving on; you never heard a sluggish performance, always marvellous rhythm and forward movement. That's why it was always so alive. He always drew things out, especially from the woodwind.'

So it was that this student affair, with so much embryonic talent in its ranks, has gone down in history as one of the great productions of the opera. It will also be recalled that it was after one of these performances that Beecham quoted Sir Hugh Allen as saying to him: "This is the most heartbreaking music in the world."

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

May 14th-18th.

Delius Festival at Chicago: Ken Russell's film (May 14th); lecture by Dr. Eric Fenby (May 16th); concert by the William Ferris Chorale including *Songs of Farewell* and the unaccompanied choruses, and with Violin Sonata No. 3 played by Arnold Roth and Eric Fenby. Further details from John Vorrasi at P.O. Box 132, La Grange, Illinois 60525.

May 18th at 8 p.m.

At the Ursuline Convent School Hall, The Downs, SW20, choral concert including the three early Delius part-songs. Tickets £1.50 and £1. Advance booking 946-3879.

June 9th at 3.30 p.m.

Delius Society AGM and Dinner (7.30) at the Pavilions' Arms, Page Street, London SW1.

October 12th-14th.

Delius Society weekend at North Walsham. See page 3 for details.

October 13th.

At the Norwich Festival, *A Mass of Life*, sung by Jacqueline Delman, Norma Proctor, John Mitchinson and Thomas Hemsley, with the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Norman Del Mar.

October 20th.

At the Norwich Festival, recital by Manoug Parikian (violin) and Malcolm Binns (piano) including Violin Sonata No. 2 by Delius.

